Session 1 – Response to Short Book

Why evaluate?

* + - Evaluation is a means by which to assess the significance or importance of a program,
    - Often a requirement from funding agencies to ascertain whether they are getting their monies worth out of supporting a particular program.
    - There are different aspects of a program that can be evaluated:

Process Evaluation - Means to understand the processes that were actually carried out compared to those developed in the written plan. Through this one determines whether there needs to be improvements or changes

Impact Evaluation – Determine what impact the delivery of the program had on variables such as knowledge, attitudes and behaviours;

Outcome Evaluation – Means by which to determine if the outcome of program delivery resulted in those long term objectives that were identified in during development

* What are the different ways to do a program evaluation?
  + - Empowerment Evaluation – is a means by which participants/clients or providers go through a process of critical reflection to consider the program in an attempt to improve it;
    - This is seen as a valuable type of evaluation process because it takes into account the views of all those involved – democratic
    - Logic Model – through the use of boxes and arrows there is a direction to show how a program is set up, describes or shows the planned activity and what are the expected results;
    - CDC Framework - is one form of Logic Model that includes a six step process that follows an ongoing cycle, and where each component or step is connected or inter-related to each other
    - Participatory Evaluation
      * These evaluations are very focused on having the stakeholder involved in the process.
      * As many people as possible should be involved in the process – this means that the stakeholders are involved at all levels – clients, coordinators, administrators, volunteers, funders, etc)
* Why is a NA needed as part of the evaluation process?
  + - In doing a NA prior to planning your evaluation, it will determine what your evaluation needs to find out.
    - In doing a NA there are 3 steps:
      * *Identify gaps* – identify the strengths of a program as it sits now; look also at those weaknesses that are preventing the program from meeting its goal;
      * *Identify priorities* – after the strengths and weaknesses have been identified, it is necessary to review these and rank the order of those issues that were identified. Those issues that either highly impact the program positively or negatively should be ranked among the top.
      * *Identify opportunities & threats/challenges* – from the list of issues garnered from the above step, one can now determine if there are opportunities to deal with the issues and possibility to build capacity. It also provides the opportunity to determine the threats or challenges to meeting the identified goals and objectives of the program – including the goals and objectives, theories of change, intended effects and success indicators is fundamental; through working with stakeholders it is essential to ascertain what the results are going to be used for and the questions that need to be answered by the evaluation (also sampling and collection, analyzing and interpreting the data); those that are doing the gathering of the evidence in the evaluation must be trained in methods being use, while taking in ethical considerations such as informed consent; The conclusions must be based on the evidence – however, necessary to taking into account those factors that lay outside evaluation criteria that may influence the outcome
* How does one ensure evaluation is effective?
  + - CDC logic model There are four key concepts:
      * Utility – has the evaluation garnered the information required by the various stakeholders?
      * Feasibility – Does the choice of evaluation plan meet the timing needs and resource limitations of the stakeholders:
      * Propriety – need to understand the ethic & legal consideration around the program, and the welfare of those involved by the evaluation and or effected by it
      * Accuracy – reliability and validity of evaluation – involves making clear and explicit statements about goals, objectives, procedures, purposes, conclusions, and sources of information as well as bout potential biases of evaluators
* Why is it important to engage stakeholders?
  + - * It is imperative that stakeholders have a voice in what is being evaluated, as well in program development.
      * It allows those that will be affected by program/evaluations have a true voice in what is being done and what is being reviewed.
* How can one best disseminate information to stakeholders?
  + - * If done correctly, the stakeholders should already have been identified.
      * Need to know what questions the stakeholders have – should be done at the outset – not after.
      * It is important to maintain open communication with the stakeholder throughout the process.
      * Need to understand when the required information will be disseminated and how.

Evaluation is a word that is tossed around periodically at our institution, but not something we use in practice. Given that we are a training organization, albeit one that brokers the majority of our curriculum from SIAST, we have no process for formally evaluating anything we do. The short book, *Evaluation Made Very Easy Accessible, and Logical,* proves to be a good starting point for understanding the fundamental importance of including evaluation in the development of the programming we do. When decisions are made to change formats of program offerings, we fail to include the stakeholders in the process of designing what effective change might look like. We fail to evaluate our processes, the impact our programming has, and whether our long term goals are being met.

This booklet had proved to provide a useful overview of the steps that need to be taken to engage in the evaluation process. I specifically found the CDC Framework useful in terms of a starting point of what I can employ within my workplace. In addition to that, I believe that the use of the logic model will also prove useful as a means to truly map out where we want to go. In my mind, we often make our decisions ‘off the cuff’ instead of sitting down and determining how our program goals meet the vision and overall goals of the organization.

In terms of becoming more structured in developing a framework around our decision making process, I found it very valuable to learn that the engagement of stakeholders in the process is deemed to be fundamental. While it makes common sense to engage those individuals that are affected by programming decisions in the process, it is reaffirming to see that the importance of stakeholder involvement is noted in the literature.

In terms of what I am left with after reading this article...wanting more information. I see there are a lot of blanks left to be filled in for me in terms of what types of evaluation to employ at my institution and how to all stakeholders in the process; not just the students.

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